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LETTERS FROM WILLIAM AND MARY,  
1795-1799

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From Originals in the Collection of Mr. Thomas S. Watson.

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THIRD INSTALMENT.

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FROM DAVID YANCEY.<sup>1</sup>

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Williamsburg, June 6th, 1795.

Dear David:—

To eradicate prejudices, or rather to excite them in favour of one's cause, is what might well have employed the philosopher's, and orators of ancient times; But I am satisfied these arts, which I pretend not to possess, and which, I think, should be laid aside between friends, would be entirely unnecessary to your candid mind. I shall therefore like Socrates lay them aside and endeavour by plain arguments to vindicate myself from the imputation you have alledged against me. As to yourself I doubt not but you have been assiduous in your inquiry

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<sup>1</sup> David Yancey was doubtless from Louisa County. In the will of one of the Yanceys of that county, dated about 1807 he speaks of books &c bequeathed to him by his brother David, so it is probable that this popular student died when a young man. He was A. B. of William and Mary, 1796.

after an opp' of writing to me; But at the same time be assured I have not been less anxious on my part. This I believe is the first opp' I have had since the reception of yours, and even now I am obliged to dispence with the reading of my lecture in order to write to you. Think not that the remembrance of my old friends and acquaintance is so easily eradicated from my memory. No Dear Davy! Be assured it is not. Often do I resolve in my mind the many happy moments we have spent together.

But to tell you the truth I scarce have time for this, its true I have frequently written to my Father often thro' necessity, but it was always in such a hurry that I scarce had time to read them over after I had written them. When therefore you take into consideration, that for some considerable time it was as much as I could do to prepare for the Lectures, being entirely unacquainted, as well with the matter, as manner, that I seldom had an opp', and when I had, it was without having time to prepare before hand, and lastly that I have been much incommoded by sickness, you will think I waited for you to begin the correspondence.

As to the manners and customs, some I like well, and some I do not, as you might suppose, many of them are different from what we uplanders have been accustomed to. The old adage might well be applied in many cases. Every man for himself, etc.

Fish and oysters are very good food at times, but in my opinion not near equal to Mr. Madison's Lectures with which I am enamoured, and without which I think no man can boast of a good education. I once thought Greek and Latin were all or nearly all the essentials of an education, but I now find they are the least part. Sturgeon goes for bacon, Fish and oysters are plenty enough in summer, but in winter, when most wanted, like other vegetables, to use Tandy's expression, they are rather scarce; which however is not owing to the real necessity. I believe so much as the want of inclination to buy, and the fear of spending a little money. Study is our principal amusement, but some times we go out and take a game of fives against the old House. If a person comes here for improvement, he must

study hard, but if pleasure be his object, it is a fine place for spending money as ever I saw. I think you have lost considerably by not coming down last fall; I expect you certainly to come down with me next fall; I have a room a little out of town, of which, if you will participate, you shall be heartily welcome. But enough of these things, I will give you a full detail when I see you. It really surprised me very much to hear that Johnny had taken his position in Louisa again. What does he say of my leaving him? You [word illegible] one of some surprising changes. Poor Jack Vaughn [word illegible] feel myself very much concerned, he is a good fellow [word illegible] hope he has recovered ere this. What, the Diamond married; ay this is the consequence of the Doctor's going to see Betty so often: Well I suppose it will stop some of their mouths from gaping. I have a heap of questions to ask you, but must defer them. Remember me to all my friends, particularly to those in Albemarle and Ducking Hole and others which I have not time to specify, also to Bob M. and believe me to be, in haste, your very affectionate friend,

Da. Yancey

[Address] Citizen David Watson,  
Green Springs,  
Louisa

Fav'd by Mr. Preston

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FROM JOHN W. TOMLIN\*

Cobham Park, May 1, 1797.

Citizen Watson,

Your kind favor of the 27th of April by Brockenbrough, have just received. Am obliged to you for fulfilling my request, but sorry to hear of your peculiar disagreeable situation.

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\* John Walker Tomlin, of Richmond County. He is probably the person intended by "J. M. Tomlin, Hanover" in the printed catalogue for 1798. He was a son of Col. Walker Tomlin of Richmond Co. (a member of the Convention of 1788), and married Margaret Williamson, daughter of Williamson Ball. J. W. Tomlin died Dec. 4, 1815. For his children see Hayden's *Virginia Genealogies*, 127, 128.

However I hope, by this time, as you have consulted the Doctor, you are either cured, or convinced by what disorder you are so tormented. I really sympathize for your condition, which I know distresses you as much, or more so than any person, but what can't be cured must be endured; and as every sweet has its bitter, so equally on the contrary every bitter must have its sweet, and as it is only by contrasting pleasure with pain that we can enjoy the former, let us be content and hope for the better; for in any situation this is the only way to be happy. I hope Lewis and Burwell have returned that you may drown your . . . by a simple game now and then, for without them it would puzzle you to make a set, without you could prevail on the old gentleman in the Library to divest himself of his religious scruples in this age of reason, and by the way of a little relaxation take an innocent throw at whist. It was near a week before I reached home from the time I left Williamsburg. We had a jolly set the morning I left town, and Brockenbrough<sup>3</sup> tells me the Bishop intends to expell us all, because we meant to do him an honor by giving him three shouts; I think this would be a cruel and ungrateful piece of business, at least disgraceful to a Bishop. Since I have been at home, have done nothing but gad about, and this would be the case if I was to continue here for twelve months. Shall be at the races next week, after that shall return to College as soon as possible; but don't know the time exactly. Have no news to communicate. Present my respects to Mr. & Mrs. Cole, particularly to the gentlemen of the Brafferton and to all the students—remind. [paper torn] son and Lewis of their promises; Write me as [words illegible] convenient,

With respect your friend and fellow student.

John W. Tomlin.

Richmond Court House

7th May '97.

[Addressed] Mr. David Watson, Student,  
Williamsburgh.

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<sup>3</sup> William Brockenbrough, afterwards Judge of the Court of Appeals of Virginia. See note to previous installment. It may be mentioned as a contrast to his youthful effervescence that he was long a prominent member of old Monumental Church, Richmond. It is also here men-

FROM CARTER HENRY HARRISON.

Clifton, June 11, 97.

Well, Watson! how are you by this time? Has that abominable eruption left you yet, or is there any probability of its leaving you? Are you in a situation to take a nearer view of these dear creatures, who render Williamsburg so enchanting to all who have formed an Acquaintance with them; and to partake more of the Gaiety and Amusements of the town, than when I took my melencholy departure? In short, do you live, or do you drag out an existence, worse even than Death itself? There, My Friend, are questions which when I took up my Pen first presented themselves as most interesting to one who so much wishes your Happiness. But to me who am so desirous to be informed of your situation, it must afford a satisfaction that you should have some knowledge of mine; which tho it be a subject rather unpleasant at this time, I will endeavor to broach with some degree of fortitude. At present I am with my mother, but expect before very long to take up my quarters with my brother Bob, who lives about two miles distant across Willis's River, between that and James River. This situation I have made choice of on account of its retirement, which makes it more proper for one who has to undergo the arduous task of conversing with my Lord Coke and his numerous train of musty associates. Be assured I tremble at the thought. How different is this state of retirement and seclusion from Society, from that Gaiety and myrth which Williamsburg affords! How painful to behold the gloomy prospect which lies before me, after having enjoyed in pleasing tho' melencholy reflection those happy moments, which like the fleeting dream, have passed never more to return! Believe me, I did not know my attachment to Williamsburg till the time had arrived when I was to bid Adieu. Like the Lover on whom some fair Damsel has

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tioned as an instance of the passing character of wild-oats sowing that a later student of William and Mary, a man in later life eminent in all good work for the public welfare and a pillar of his church, is said (in his family) to have been under the "influence" but once in his life, and that was an occasion when, after a late sitting with fellow students and a warm dispute as to the time, he took a candle and, at three o'clock in the morning, went out to consult the sun dial on the campus.

exercised her charms by little and little, when unapprised of the spark which had kindled in his Breast, he beholds her with a seeming indifference, till the fatal moment arrives when he is to take a long, long farewell.

But enough of this, lest I tire you. Your letter of last fall, containing information of the State of the College, I found here on my arrival. It reached this soon after I went down, but the Family supposing it to have come from you, in answer to my letter, of which they knew the contents, did not think it necessary to send it to me. I suppose there is hard whipping now among the candidates for the 4th July. Do write as soon as possible, and give me all the news you can collect, and rest assured that your letters will always be gladly received by

Your Sincere Friend,

C. H. Harrison.

Remember me to T. [or J.] Allen and all my acquaintances at College; it is not worth while to particularize. If you think proper, you may make my best respects to the Bishop, but that is just as you please—but certainly to Mr. Bellini. Likewise to Mrs. H——d and her daughters, and tell them I wish them all the happiness this world can afford.

[Address] June 7th, '97  
Mr. David Watson,  
student, William & Mary College,  
Williamsburg

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FROM BENJAMIN HOWARD.\*

Richmond, July 14th, 1797

Dear Watson

I have been detained much longer in this quarter than I expected, a horse not being sent for me as yet, and finding it im-

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\*Benjamin Howard settled in Kentucky after graduating, was a member of Congress from that state 1807-10, when he resigned; Governor of Upper Louisiana, 1810-12, appointed a brigadier-general U. S. A., March 12, 1813, and given command of the territory west of the Mississippi River, and died at St. Louis, Sept. 18, 1814. His name does not appear in the printed catalogue.

possible to get one on any terms here—But however I have spent my time very agreeably sometimes here and sometimes at our relations Majr. Prosser's; I have dined with several Gentlemen in the neighborhood and received invitation from others, which I shall accept if I stay any time; in short I find the people very agreeable that is to say true Virginians; But alas! when I mention the word agreeable, as applied to a people or a place, Williamsburg presents itself and causes me to experience all those pleasing (tho mournful) sensations which are produced by the recollection of past pleasures, but I find myself greatly relieved by the hope of returning once more to that place where I have been happy tho my pleasures will be much abridged embittered by the absence of many friends whom I hold in high estimation, and the painfull thought of never meeting again; but I shall endeavor to discard that gloomy disposition of mind ever willing to assist in making us miserable on such occasions and substitute the pleasing thought of a happy meeting in such circumstances that we shall be able to spend Hours that will equal if not surpass the past for pleasure. I hope you will be particular in writing to me as nothing you can do will add so much to my happiness; never let it be an excuse that you have nothing to write; if that be a good apology I might without censure be silent this time, it is certain that you will always be either well or unwell, happy or unhappy, and I shall ever willingly read a letter containing such Intelligence; that I may be able to condole with you in your distress or enter into a lively participation of your pleasures as the case may be, suspect me not of too great professions of friendship, I dislike them, nor for speaking the Language of a passion which I do not feel, but believe the expressions to be the expression of a Heart that glows with attachment before it professes a friendship and then you will only do justice to your unfeigned Friend etc.

Benj. Howard

P. S. Remember me to all the Lads at College and at the upper House also to the Raleigh family<sup>\*</sup>—I write in a great

<sup>\*</sup> This would make it seem probable that some students boarded at the Raleigh, though it is believed the College statutes forbade students living in taverns.



hurry do excuse inaccuracies I shall endeavour to atone for this letter by writing those in future so that they will be at least legible when I set down I intended to write to Cable [Cabell] but time will not permit therefore remember me to Mr. & Mrs. Moir & the young men there also Mrs. Tazewell, Littleton\* & Col Griffin' & Lady & all others who may enquire for me

I forget, I went with Taylor to old Judge Lyons<sup>9</sup> but he refused to examine him, his certificate being defective, he will try some of the other judges as he wishes much to obtain Licence before he goes up, some gentlemen are just waiting for me to ride into the country.

[Addressed]

[Endorsed] July 14th. 97

Mr. David Watson

Howard

Student at Wm. & Mary College

By Post.

[Richmond July 18, 1797]

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FROM ISAAC A. COLES.<sup>9</sup>

William & Mary College, Novb. 29th., 1797

Dr. Friend,

When I was up the Country in the vacation I heard to my great satisfaction that you were about to return to this old place not to study but to woo the Lovely Betsey; this I readily believed as I heard it from a very intimate friend of Miss Maupin's<sup>10</sup> & as I was aware of your partiality. But while in

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\* Littleton Waller Tazewell graduated A. B., at William and Mary in 1791. He was Governor and United States Senator.

<sup>7</sup> Col. Griffin was Col. Samuel Griffin who had served as a Colonel in the Continental Line; a member of the Board of War; of the House of Delegates from Williamsburg 1787-88, of Congress 1789-95, and died Nov. 3rd, 1810. The name of his wife is not given in the printed genealogy, but she was probably Mrs. Judith Griffin, daughter of Carter Burwell, whose death is announced in the *Virginia Gazette*. There is a fine portrait of Col. Griffin by Gilbert Stuart.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Lyons, Judge of the Court of Appeals.

<sup>9</sup> For Isaac A. Coles see note to former installment.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth or Betsy Maupin, as she was most commonly called, was evidently a very charming girl, and, as appears from these letters and others published in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, was for a number of years the reigning belle of Williamsburg. She was the daughter of Gabriel Maupin and his second wife Dorcas Allen to whom he was

imagination I was painting you fired with impatience & flying on the wings of love to see & embrace the dear object of your affection, while I saw her gently chide your impetuous ardour, & gaze on you with eyes overflowing with love & tenderness, I was alarmed at a report of a quite different nature; Parson Hert informed me that you were attacked with a violent Rheumatism which had confined you to your bed for some time; I have since been informed by many of its extreme obstinacy and disagreeable effects. How little Watson did I expect to hear this when I left you last July on the Raleigh steps, when health & vigor shone forth in every feature, & seemed superior even to the ravages of time. Nor shall they now yield thus tamely & with a struggle. I know that mind of yours will ever prove superior to evil, Never will groundless despair take possession of a breast like yours; No. Again shall you resume the Orbit from whence you have been accidentally driven; Again shall you revolve in the region of that Mirth & jolity which once you so fondly loved & again shall you be David Watson the admirer of E. Maupin.

Happy, thrice happy am I to hear by Mr. Quarles that these my predictions will shortly be verified. But let me now tell you of Old Williamsburg & its contents.

Most of our old friends & fellow students have returned together with several new ones five or six & twenty of us board here with Mr. Moir the rest live at College. There are in all about forty. We are as merry & mischievous as ever, & now & then take a trip into the Blue room.

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married in 1768. Extracts from the family Bible seen many years ago do not give the date of her birth; but her sponsors were Mary Craig, Susannah Armistead, Archibald Williamson and William Allen. One who had the occasion to read this series of letters (and others unpublished) would readily feel, over the long interval of years, something of her charm and would hope that after her girlish triumphs she would retire and become a delightful wife to some good fellow; but, alas! as often happens with college belles, she became a college widow and died unmarried at Louisville, Ky., in 1847. Some of her letters and her picture (if such exists) would form a more interesting publication in this Magazine, than many of those of famous statesmen.

The sponsors for her sister Ann (Nancy) were D. Pasteur, Capt. John Pasteur, John Steward, William Pitt, Ann Pasteur, Ann Craig, Fanny Pasteur, Mrs. Whitaker and Susan Cocke. She married Norborne Beale, had a son Norborne Gantt Beale, and died in Kentucky.

There are few Ladies in town at present tho they are coming in every day like hogs to market. Little Nancy & Beal are still engaged though I am afraid they will never bring these matters to a focus. The lovely Betsey is at present at the Bolling Green with her relation Mr. Homes, tho she is expected every day & I hope when I write you again that I shall be able to be much fuller on this head. Little E. F. has reigned unrivaled here for some time, but Miss Champ Carter<sup>11</sup> of Albemarle has lately arrived & disputed the palm very warmly with her; I make no doubt but you have heard of the observation which Ogelvey made on Miss Champ, & which I think was extremely just, viz. that she was Corporal elegance. This Old place affords nothing new; it wears precisely the same phiz that it did last year, nor would it be in the power of the strictest observer to find the smallest alteration. Remember me particularly to Yancey should you see him, & believe me to be sincerely  
your friend

Isaac A. Coles

P. S. Cabell desires to be remembered to you & says he will write you very shortly.

[Addressed]

[Endorsed] 29th. Nov. 97

David Watson

I. A. Coles.

Favd. by

Louisa

Mr. Quarles.

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FROM GARRETT MINOR.<sup>12</sup>

WmsBurg, Dec. 20, 1797

Dear Watson,

Your Favour of the 28th. of November came safely to hand

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<sup>11</sup> Champe Carter here referred to was probably Sarah Champe Carter, daughter of Robert Carter, and granddaughter of Edward Carter, of "Blenheim" in the same county. She married Benjamin Randolph, of Albemarle County.

<sup>12</sup> Garrett H. Minor, of Louisa County appears in the printed catalogue in 1798. He was probably a son of Garrett Minor, of "Sunning Hill", one of whose daughters, Sarah, married David Watson, to whom these letters were written. Garrett Minor, the younger, was a member of the House of Delegates for Spotsylvania County 1817-18, 1818-19, 1821-22, 1827-28, 1828-29 and 1829-30.

and believe me, when I assure you, that I heartily rejoiced in the prospect of your recovering. Your situation ere this must have become irksome even to a quietist, and probability of amendment must be pleasurable to yourself, and agreeable to your friends. Most of your old acquaintances here sympathized most cordially with you, and most unfeignedly rejoice in your restoration to Health, and tranquility. Some of them have written to you, you have ere this received their letters; they were sent up by Mr. Robert Quarles, who promised to give them a speedy as well as safe conveyance.

Your exculpation of the Bishop I received with pleasure, and I am able to tell you with candour that I agree with you in all your positions. Whatever impressions I may have received on my arrival here to his prejudice are happily dissipated; and by a continued succession of worthy & beneficent acts, I am induced to believe him a man of probity and Honour. I am pretty well assured that this College owes its present existence to his unwearied exertion in its favour; that were his supporting influence taken away, the whole system would fall into anarchy and even annihilation. The visitors have acted very ungenerously, and their inertion may extenuate in some, if not in all points the much abused infractions of collegiate Regulations. The Professors themselves have quarreled on this matter with as much animosity and rancour as the Students. Bishop & Tucker I fancy had never any cordial regard for each other, but now it has transgressed the bounds of decency. On Tuckers side I mean. On our offering to pay him 4 guineas he grew offended, declared that he had no right to them, that to demand them was an unwarrantable stretch of power, and that no professor could with decency and Honour accept them. What were his motives for these his declarations I know not, but I thought that since the measure was determined, and the Students had acquiesced in it, he might have spared his comments & Reflections. Whether these sentiments were the effusions of a rational conviction of the unconstitutionality of the measure, or from some private fostered pique against the professors, I leave you from your knowledge of the men to decide. But this I will assert, and I doubt not that you will agree with

me, that Tucker, tho a man strictly honest, is too much warped by prejudice too much led astray by passion. His animadversions have not been confined to Mr. Madison alone, but have extended to Mr. Andrews conduct. He had flatly and frankly told us that Mr. Andrews in becoming a member of the Legislature has not only violated the laws of the College, but the Laws of this Country, and that he is sorry to see that body so inattentive to the execution of their own Laws as not to take notice of it, and its infractors. The propriety of the Remark I refer to you. Tucker seems to affect a contradiction and diversity of thought and action with the other Professors, whether from singularity or a conviction of his being right I cannot determine, but I can say it renders him very disgusting.

Well sir, I have seen, by way of a change, the tremendous redoubtable terrifying insides of the Blue Room. A party made of about 15 drank rather freely and in the hour of juvenile fervour and imprudence patrolled the Streets, and by some taunting reflections over the morals of some of the reputable part of the town, provoked a Mr. Hornsby to fire a gun at them, which compliment they returned by a salute of about 50 brick bats. They immediately retired. Hornsby by a knack of magnifying (which you know is extremely common) has aggravated it into an assault; and complained to the town hall, whose head, Mr. Bracken (who made himself very busy) condemned us, and complained to Mr. Madison. He had us called into the Blue Room before the professors, who after sundry interrogations to which they received no answer, condemned us to further trial. The matter rests undertermined yet.

We have written to the Bishop and made every concession consistent with the case. The Bishop wishes the matter to be compromised as soon as possible, as the most respectable party of the College was engaged in it. For instance what think you of Mr. Brokenbrough as our ring leader, Coles, Nelson, N. Burwell,<sup>13</sup> & the matter with its concomitant aggravations will soon rest consigned to oblivion.

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<sup>13</sup> This was doubtless Nathaniel Burwell, A. B., 1798, then of "Carter's Grove", James City and afterwards of "Carter Hall", in the present Clarke County. Thomas Nelson, of Hanover, and William Nelson of York, were students in 1798 as was Robert Nelson, A. B.

Your old friend Weylie is about leaving College much to the regret of his acquaintance, and his pupils. He lives with Ambler of James Town. Ambler gives him £60 per annum: and the fees of as many Scholars as he can get. He leaves college the 14th of Jany.

As to any other news I know of none but some trivial occurrences of town, which are not worth the trouble of Retail. Such for instance, as Basset's courting Eve Formicola.<sup>14</sup> It is supposed it will do. Beale is so taken up with little Nancy that he cannot attend lectures, and when he does knows nothing of it. 'Amor vincit omnia' it has subdued all & every thing in Beale. Believe me with sincere regard

Your Fd.

G. Minor.

I envy you your month on Duckinhole—  
Cabell, Coles, Brokenbrough desire to be  
remembered kindly to you.

[Addressed]

David Watson Esq.

Louisa

Care Mr. Terrel  
Richmond.

[Endorsed]

20th. Dec., '97

G. Minor.

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FROM JOHN W. TOMLIN.

Jan. 14, 1798.

Wm. & Mary College.

Dear Watson:

This will be handed you by Mr. Johnson. By him I received the agreeable news of your being again restored to the free exercise of your limbs. Believe me, my friend, nothing of the

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<sup>14</sup> Eve Formicola, who appears to have been for several years one of the leading belles of Williamsburg. She married Stewart Bankhead. She was daughter of Serafina Formicola, who long kept a well-known tavern in Richmond. He had probably been a steward to Lord Dunmore.

kind ever affected me so much, as when I heard of your unfortunate situation. From the description I have had of your disorder, the first cause of it, the manner in which you were taken, its falling from your eyes into your legs, and the low state to which it reduced you, yours appears to have been a case very peculiar. Such a one, I hope, you nor any of my friends will ever experience again. I was taken early in the fall with bilious fevers, which, together with several colds, caught by imprudent conduct, kept me very much indisposed till near the end of November; when, I was seized with a violent pleurisy. So soon as I could venture out, I came down immediately to Williamsburg; and about ten days ago I was taken again with something bordering on a pleurisy, which obliged me to call in the aid of a doctor. I am still much indisposed; though a great deal better than I have been. But let us dismiss this sickly subject—and hope to live to enjoy many a happy hour yet before we quit the face of clay. I attend the Lectures on law; our class are seventeen in number; and poor creatures, the weakest set that ever were termed Law students before. I shall continue at College, I believe, no longer than Mr. Tucker's course lasts; and that he will finish, if he keeps his present gait, about the first of March. Our friend Weyley left College, to live with Mr. Ambler about Christmas; I saw him in College today, he is very well. The students are not half so sociable as they were last course; party spirit runs high, and we have no society among us. I have been to a ball since I came down; and oh! Watson the little fellows, the sweet charming little fellows that were there! I won't mention particulars, but this I whisper Miss E. M. was absent. I don't know why it is, but so it is that she never has been seen in Williamsburg since the sum[mer?] Tell me, have you heard, or do you know any tidings of this forlorn, disconsolate fair one; When strength and sprightliness shall resume their vigour, Oh seek her out and comfort her. I should have written you before, but this is the first opportunity—I hope to receive a letter from you shortly. My respects particularly to Yancey; tell him if he feels an inclination, I shall be very happy in corre-

sponding with him. Hoping that you may have a speedy, perfect and lasting recovery, permit me to subscribe

Your friend,

Rec'd 10 Feb. 98  
J. W. Tomlin.

John W. Tomlin,  
Adieu

[Address] Mr. David Watson,  
Louisa County

A favor of  
W. C. Johnson

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FROM WILLIAM BROCKENBROUGH.

Williamsburg, Jan. 14, 1798.

Dear Watson:—

In conformity with the divine Doctrine expressed in the Decalogue, "Remember that thou keep *holy* the Sabbath Day" I take up my pen to do a deed a thousand times more holy than that of going to Church to observe the comings in, and the goings out, the Motions, the Actions, and the Dress, of Girls, or what is still worse the Ravings of an hypocritical Priest.<sup>15</sup> For is not that amazing hypocrisy which induces the recommending of Doctrine with earnestness, nay even with energy, which very Doctrines are not thought of, as soon as the pulpit is empty? This is a pretty beginning you will say. Well! as I was going to observe I did not receive your letter of the 19th December till four or five days ago, and then it was almost worn out, I however made a shift to make out the words, and that you know was all that could be wished. But I cannot but think it rather hard that the communication between us should be so interrupted, and so slow. Pray cannot you get some neighbour of yours to become a Federal Grand Jury Man who will present the want of post riders in your part of the country

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<sup>15</sup> The "hypocritical Priest" certainly deserved no such epithet. He was Rev. Dr. John Bracken, rector of Bruton, and President of William and Mary 1812-14. He was elected Bishop of Virginia, but declined. The scoffing young gentleman who wrote this letter afterwards became a Judge of the Court of Appeals of Virginia, and one of the pillars of Monumental Church, Richmond.



"as a real Evil." As the wise Jury are fond of presenting abstract lifeless things, why not present this want? And as they have once endeavoured to put an end to, or at least to clog the wheels of a liberal correspondence, methinks they may now shift their ground with Grace, and wipe off the slur upon their reputation by a contrary Presentment.

I am glad to hear by Mr. Johnson who is the bearer of this that you are better than when you wrote me the letter, and that you can walk about a little without the aid of crutches. It is indeed a lamentable thing that a man in the very prime of Youth should be made decrepit in body; for your Mind it is evident is perfectly healthy. It would be ridiculous in me to attempt to offer you any puny consolation, you know your situation, you experience the pain but you possess fortitude, and this is the sublimest, and the best of virtues, by this sovereign remedy, corporeal infirmity is stript of more than half. Nay I believe I may say of more than all, its horrors. Keep your *mind* calm, preserve your fortitude, and you will not only obtain a more speedy cure, but you will be victorious, even though your pains of Body should increase million-fold.

Weylie now lives at James Town; he came to town yesterday to pay us a visit and has not yet left us. Look below and observe what advantage he has taken of me. I will e'en let it remain as it is. I miss him a good deal. Whitfield<sup>18</sup> has returned to College, attends Tucker. He is a young man of very considerable Abilities. He is very well versed in the detail of European, and American Politicks, and is by no means deficient in the principles. He will too converse with ease, and with propriety on almost every other subject, but a peculiar way of screwing his mouth and of clipping his words which all proceeds from a knowledge of his talents, and from a ridiculous vanity, render him not so agreeable a companion as he might otherwise be; except this, I am extremely pleased with his virtues, and his abilities. He was a Candidate last year, as is also now for the Assembly.

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<sup>18</sup> This was Charles Whitfield, A. B., 1798. Wills Cooper, or Cowper, of North Carolina (in the catalogue), but probably really of Isle of Wight Co., Va., was also A. B., 1798.

In addition, I will also mention Cabell, W. Burwell, and Cowper as agreeable, and instructive companions. Minor \* who comes from Louisa, I like, but he is too damned fond of hard words. If he would exclude some of them from his nomenclature he would really have a choice collection of them, but unfortunately he has a strange preference for the hard ones. I do not think by the bye that his ideas keep pace with his language; he reads much, thinks little, and pays more attention to imaginary Beauties in Words, or combinations of words than to thoughts. I may however be mistaken. Tomlin is here but has been sick for a week.

I have hard luck here, Watson; would you think that I have been engaged in a nocturnal frolic? Yes, I have. Last month after supping on a plenty of egg-nog in Minor's Room, what must we do but turn out, and march up and down Town with the Fiddle, and at length by the drunkenness of —— be induced to brick-bat old Hornsby's House. The Council of the Town met twice, and the Blue Room Council met six times on the occasion and at length it was amicably settled by the Intercession of Prentis, Barraud, etc.—Terrible Doings and we have all lost our characters by it. Minor will give you the particulars. I have now nothing more to say but to wish you a speedy Recovery. Compliments to D. Yancey and believe me to be

With sincerity your Friend,

William Brockenbrough

P. S. E. M. is not in Town.

[Address] Mr. David Watson  
Near the Green Springs  
Louisa County

Mr. Johnson.

[On back of sheet] Woodson, alias Citizen Death, is going to quit, not this Life, but this College tomorrow.

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\* Garret Minor was evidently born before his time. If he were now living he would no doubt be a leading writer among the Young Intellectuals. To the modern man-in-the-street, Brockenbrough's criticism of his friend, "too damned fond of hard words," would seem to suit admirably some contemporary authors.

FROM ISAAC A. COLES.

Williamsburg, March 21, 1798.

Dear Friend:—

I hope you will not take it for a commonplace remark, when I tell you, that the pleasure I felt, on the receipt of your last letter, was infinitely great. The reports circulating here about you, previous to its coming to hand, were of a truly alarming nature. Some said you were no more. Others said you were in a situation worse if possible than death. Your friends all lamented your hard fate and gave you over as lost. In this situation of affairs to be informed of your recovery, to hear from yourself that you still lived and were likely to regain your former vigor afforded me a pleasure too exquisite for language [page worn] [I possess?] How often have I been induced to state that question to myself, which I have heard you so often describe; "Is there such a thing as Soul, or can it exert independence of the body? Where now is Watson? Is he annihilated, or does he animate some other body? Is he now enjoying the reward of his many virtues, in the happy fields of Elysium, or is he hurled into regions that glow, with never ceasing fires? Is he capable of sensation although immaterial? Can nothing feel or think or ——— But I will go no farther, already I am far beyond where I can comprehend; Let us act with propriety in this world, and if there be an here-after, we shall, no doubt, enjoy its richest blessings But by way of shifting the scene, suppose I tell you I have seen the lovely Betsey, yes! I spent an evening with her not long since, She appeared to be perfectly well. When I told her, I had a message to her, from a particular friend, she enquired very anxiously who he was and when I mentioned the name of Watson, I thought I saw joy sparkle in her eyes; She desired me to remember her very particularly to you, and inform you that she was very happy to hear of your recovery. She says, she has lost your eye, but has your heart very secure, and wishes to know if you have taken as good care of her keep-sake. Little "Eve" is again engaged, and I think, it will not be her fault,

this time, if she is not married. Norfleet appears to have her too susceptible heart perfectly at his command. The time appointed for their marriage is the last of April. Your sentiments with respect to this College, accord perfectly with mine; the custom of pulling down steps, breaking carriages etc. I think of all others the most detestable. Of late it has become vastly too fashionable. The other evening<sup>17</sup> a large party made an attack upon the sacred property of God; the Communion Table was broken into a thousand pieces, all the prayer Books and Bibles scattered about the Church Yard, one winder entirely destroyed, and the pulpit itself bedaubed from one end to the other, with human excrement. An offence so heinous, called aloud for punishment. The Bishop and professors talked high of expulsion, But the party was so numerous, and many of them so respectable, that, although they had direct proof, nothing was done. I once thought this old place might again survive, but I am convinced now that that time will never arrive; Were it not for the Bishop it would not now exist, without him, I make no doubt, it will expire. The students have been extremely merry this winter, tho entirely at our own expense. The inhabitants have not given us a single party the whole course. We have had a number of fine girls with us, from Richmond, Fredericksburg and other places. One from Richmond in particular exceeded anything I had any idea of, Yes Watson she is superior even to Betsey herself, she is a Helen in face, and an angel in disposition. A single glance of her eyes did more mischief among the students than the powerful arm of Achilles among the Trojans during the ten Years War. When she led down the dance I could say with the poet:

Grace was in her steps, heaven in her eyes  
In every gesture, dignity and love.

I am afraid if I go on much longer at this rate you will take me either for a mad man or a Lover, I will therefore desist, or

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<sup>17</sup> This sacrelage seems now inconceivable. Even if those who took part in it had been drinking until they were crazed, it is hard to believe that such a thing occurred. It can only be hoped that He, in the words He used so long before, said, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do".

in other words I will come to a final close, for after talking of her, every other subject must be insipidity itself. Adieu Dear Friend and believe me to be

Forever yours

Isaac A Coles

H. Lewis send his love and wishes to know if you have been [word illegible] lately

[Address] David Watson, Esq.

Louisa.

Mr. Michie.

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FROM JAMES M. MORRIS.<sup>18</sup>

W'msburg Apl. 28 — 98

Dear Watson

I received your favour of the 23 inst for which I am much obliged to you, not so much because I have been gorged with philosophy, but because, I am always glad to hear from an old friend; more especially, as I left you not in very good case; from which, to my great satisfaction I hear you are almost recovered—I am very much surprised, that you should doubt the strength of my nerves, were they to suffer no greater shock, than the receipt of a letter from you, which, (were they really weak) would rather contribute to strengthen than the contrary. I hope Michie explained Parker's affair to you, and if he did not, I will when I see you; but enough of this stuff.

With respect to affairs here, we go on much in the old way, sometimes reading, sometimes frolicking. Apropos! I was at one the other evening where I saw your old sweetheart E. M., who, I think to do her justice is as handsome as ever and between you and myself Davy, she does credit to your taste; I must try and get acquainted with her, which I have not done yet being not much of a Ladys man, but by Jove I am almost afraid; she has such an air of dignity in her deportment that she strikes me with a kind of awe—

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<sup>18</sup> James M. Morris, of Louisa, A. B., 1798.

Anne is not yet married to Norbourn, who continues to visit her constantly, and it is said they are to be married sometime in the fall. E. Russell is also to be married, about that time to Mr. Robinson<sup>19</sup>, of Richmond, and to close my intelligence with respect to marriage affairs, little Eve that inconstant, wavering little creature has settled her mind and was married a few days ago to J. Norfleet with everybody's consent, I believe, but Lewis and Selden's who would rather have procrastinated the matter, could they have done so with decency, as to the other ladies of this place, with deference be it spoken, I fancy there is no chance of their getting married—as to the lads in general they have most of them gone home to stay during the vacation—Wylie has been gone some time to Alexandria and is every day expected. Should he return before Yancey leaves this place you'll have an account of his adventures I suppose.

Tom Maury goes on much after the old sort and Peach will be up in our part of the Country in a few days as he sets out Monday next.

It begins to be bedtime so farewell Dave

James M Morris

Be so good as to let me hear from you shortly since you are convinced my nerves will not suffer by it

J. M. M.

[Address] David Watson Esq.

Louisa

Fav'd by D. Yancey

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FROM GARRETT MINOR.

William & Mary April 28, 1798.

Dear Watson:—

I have received by our friend Yancey your letter of April 23rd. You ask why our correspondence has ceased? I am unable to assign any adequate cause for it. You extenuate

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<sup>19</sup> Anthony Robinson (1770-1851), married Elizabeth Russell (1778-1852) daughter of William Russell, Clerk of James City County. He was an uncle of Conway and Moncure Robinson.

yourself by the irresistible plea of laziness. In compliance with that admirable precept of Christianity "Do as you would be done by"! you will certainly not demur at my putting in the same plea. If we reciprocally allow this reason, we shall be exactly even, and may begin our correspondence, as it were, a principio.

In the Letters of one who is, as it were, "insulated" here, you must expect to find a continued strain of egotism. You must have experienced it heretofore, and it is the only apology which I shall make in troubling you with it now. Then Sir without any further apology, you must know that I am still plodding at the course which is professed to be taught here. Still attending that admirable System of Political Wisdom which the authors on our course continually inculcate. When, Sir, my mind flags with that, when its abstrusities unhinge it, as a recreation, and as a means of restoring its proper tension, I apply to the pages of that far-famed author of *perspicacity* and *elegance*, Sir E. Coke, which my worthy Tutor Judge Tucker so ardently pressed me to commence and as a relaxation from this I skim over the surface of mathematicks. You must confess that here is a most delectable variety! No listlessness, no inertia can here take place. But in so extensive range of Science the mind must ever find some pleasure, or discover new gratifications. This would ever be the case with common minds, but [mine] I must confess is of that uncommon texture that it is not susceptible of these impressions, or capable of these improvements. That ardour which ambition and emulation excites is stifled in a moment, and from the height of expectations I am plunged into the gulf of despondence what can aid me? You will say patience, and perseverance. God grant them to me! For I require some more powerful stimulants than that which actuates me at present, to rouse me to noble endeavour—pray give me some good and wholesome counsel on this head.

One great source of improvement which here I enjoy is the Social intercourse of fellow students. Mutual endeavours to improvement might be expected. If difficulties should be ren-

dered easy, if doubts should be resolved, and improvements in any branch of Science should be gained, from that Friendship and Liberality which ought to characterize the actions of youth, we should suppose these circumstances communicated with the generosity of philanthropists, and not with the selfishness of emulous vanity. By violence, by illiberality, and passion these beneficial effects are rendered migratory—I no longer enter into them. Disputes I cautiously avoid, as lending to no improvement, and waive every subject which has a tendency to produce them. What a pity by our own folly we are deprived of this admirable source of real improvement? Was it so when you attended this college? Pray inform me, for I have entertained an opinion for sometime past that this college is going down hill, and that the impolitic conduct of its present occupants has aided greatly in precipitating it.

But, Sir, my greatest source of real improvement and gratification results from a system which you would think me least susceptible of, would you believe that that shame, awkwardness, and dulness which ever characterized me heretofore, should be superseded by joviality and gallantry? You will say impossible? But Sir it is really the case—what could cause this great metamorphosis? Nothing else than the superiority of the ladies of this place “True they are fair,” and true they are agreeable and are the most engaging, pleasing, easy and polite set of women with whom I was ever acquainted. One of the finest has lately retired from this elysium. E. Formicola is noosed irrevocably to Mr. Norfleet. On the whole I admired Eve. She was fickle, inconstant, extravagant and coquettish. But she was endowed with sensibility and a share of sense which in some measure extenuated these qualities.

“If to her share some female Errors fall!

Look on her face and you’ll forget them all!”—Pope.

But who is that that approaches from the regions of the lost? Her demeanor is noble and majestick, the radiance of Beauty invests her around, her blue eyes softly roll in Love[?], her Breast is the white waive of the ocean, and her words are the



voice of peace. This virgin fit only for a heroine of Ossian is no other than my cousin E. Maupin, the finest woman my eyes ever beheld. In her I behold the consumation of elegance, dignity, softness and sensibility. I ever thought woman naturally inferior to man, but she has operated to erase these ungenerous opinions. I visit her freely, enjoy the pleasure of her conversation, of which you may be sometimes the object, and gain real improvement, without the danger of being fascinated so far as to injure myself. Her Sister Nancey is to be married in September to that exemplar of Idiocy, N. Beale. Prior<sup>20</sup> is to be married also in a short time to Miss Tyler, and Miss Russell to Robertson [Robinson], I shall return in July about the 15th.

Yours sincerely,

G. Minor.

[Address] Mr. David Watson,  
 Louisa.  
 Care of Mr. Yancey.

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FROM CARTER H. HARRISON.

Clifton, Nov. 21st. 1798

Dear Watson

It has been a considerable time since the receipt of your letter by Mr. Johnson. No opportunity since that has been offered except the one by our friend Vaughan, which on a supposition that I should see you in a few days, I thought it unnecessary to make use of. How much I have been disappointed in this Respect I leave it to yourself to judge. A change of circumstances, however, I am sensible put it out of your power to gratify me with the pleasure of seeing you at Mr. Vaughan's. I arrived there on the day of rendesvous and learned of Doc'r Keane the cause of your not coming. I still had hopes & was indeed told that Yancey would certainly meet me, but what ill fated accident deprived me of that Pleasure also, I have never been able to learn.

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<sup>20</sup> John Clayton Pryor, of Gloucester County, a student in 1798 &c., married Elizabeth Armistead, daughter of Hon. John Tyler, Sr. She died in 1824.

You appear to think me hasty in drawing my conclusion from your first letter. I even felt myself worried with the subject & might have made my conclusion too extreme for the Premises; but make the worst of it, and you can only ascribe it to a Heart warm in its friendships, & too easily alarmed at anything which may threaten a dissolution of them.

I had the great satisfaction to see our worthy friend Howard about ten days ago. He called on me on his way to Williamsburg, & staid with me a couple of nights. We passed the time so agreeably in talking over all the diverting scenes at the old College, that when he took leave, I felt very sensibly the want of sleep which I had lost the two preceeding nights. He expressed the greatest desire to see Yancey and yourself. After attending the law lectures this winter, he means to apply for license in the Spring & return to Kentucky to commence the Practice. From him we shall be able to learn how things go on at the old place. I suppose you have received the melancholy news of the death of Mrs. Griffin, & no doubt make one of the number who sincerely lament the unhappy event.

I am much pleased to find you are determined to attend at this session of the Assembly. I have only to fear that something may again turn up to prevent my seeing you. In the course of a fortnight I expect to be in Richmond.

Adieu

C. H. Harrison

Nov. 25

Friend Vaughan came up on yesterday & returns this morning. He will convey this to you in a few days. Tell Yancey I am very sorry Meriwether's hurry will not admit of my writing to him. It was my intention to have written to him when I could meet with a conveyance for this. However as the last letter went from me he cannot complain.

On Friday next I purpose setting out for Richmond.

C. H. H.

[Address]

Mr. David Watson  
Yanceyville  
Louisa

Mr. Vaughan

FROM BENJAMIN HOWARD.

Williamsburg, Jany. 30th., 1799

Dear Watson

I sit down to tell you that Howard lives not to forget his friends but to hold them in the most affectionate remembrance; let me assure my dear Watson that when I received his letter sensations were experienced by me which could be felt, but begger all description; one from Carter Harrison was handed me at the same time, which had its share in heightening my joy although I had seen him shortly before. I had heard of your long illness, & of your recovery, before you wrote me. I hope it is the last time you will be visited by that infernal complaint but be careful, it is a disorder easily brought on again by being a little exposed. I know a little of it by experience. Why did not David Yancey drop me [a] line. I take the liberty of challenging him through you to a correspondence. If he does not give speedy satisfaction I shall pop a paper at him shortly charged with the bitterest load of invective he has received lately.

How do you come on in the law way, as for my own part I read like the Devil & the more I read the greater are my doubts on many points. God knows when I shall get them removed but after all I am a right sharp chunk of a Lawyer, were a man to give me 15s. for advice I would look as grave as an owl & fetch out a long & probably erroneous opinion but what of that, rest assured there is a devilish deal of error sold nowadays by our profession to the gaping populace, at least one fourth are nothing more than retailers of mistake. Tucker has us under the whip, he has been remarkably polite to me. I have dined there several times since my arrival here, the people are generally very liberal to me. I have had more invitations than reached me during my whole stay here before, that is to dine. L. Griffin<sup>a</sup> will be married this night week, Mercer is here.

B. Russell will share the same long & anxiously looked fate

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<sup>a</sup> Louisa, daughter of Judge Cyrus Griffin and Lady Christina Stuart, his wife, married Col. Hugh Mercer, Jr., of Fredericksburg, youngest son of General Hugh Mercer.

about the same time. Mrs. Shippen is here carrying all before her. I assure you we are going on pleasantly. There will be a good deal of dancing, I wish to God you were here with that pidgeon wing you told me about in your letter. I remembered you to B. Maupin. She looked *wonderfully* pleased indeed. I think that girl would be more than willing to see you. She looked better than I ever saw her & was much admired by every one the other night at a Ball. I got a letter from Vaughan lately, he is well. Is it among the possible events that we shall ever all meet again. I am determined [world illegible], when do you intend getting a License. I shall apply when I leave this place. Taylor is driving away stretching his coat tail and that he will do well *I think no man will deny*. [Words illegible] his old Society expression. I hope you will seize [word illegible] opp'y of writing to me, at this period of our well established friendship it would be disgusting to you & beneath me to make lavish profession of regard to give assurance of my wish to correspond with you at whatever distance we may be thrown apart by chance & events not within our control.

There are between 30 & 40 students here this course & they are generally very steady fellows—a few of the old stock remain. Banket [Bankhead?] Deans &c. Banket will make a clever Fellow I think, not forgetting Woodson for whom I have a fondness, he reads and is improving.

I am Dear Watson Yours etc.

Benja. Howard

[Address] David Watson Esquire  
Yanceyville,  
Louisa County

By Post.